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Against Germany

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MY KITTEN LUCKY

On Friday March 12* 1938 Hitler marched into Austria and in June my mother and I were able to escape from Vienna to England, by working there as cook and parlourmaid.

After Hitler invaded Poland and war broke out with England as well, even Jewish refugees were considered potential enemy aliens and had to be classified before a tribunal. My mother and I were allowed to remain on our jobs on a country estate, however I soon got married and joined my husband Joe in London.

As servants, my mother and I lived very isolated lives and our sole companionship were cats of which we grew very fond.

One day Joe brought me a present: a beautiful little kitten, black except for a white face, white chest and white paws. I named her Lucky. It was fun watching her playing with string, crawling into boxes, jumping all over the place. When we took her on our lap she purred curled up and purred contentedly.

Once, when Joe was alone with her, Lucky scratched him and he yelled at her and slapped her paws. Suddenly she disappeared. Joe called, looked all over for her—no luck—no Lucky. He got very upset. Surprise: the minute I came home and she heard my voice Lucky reappeared.

Soon after, Joe had to leave me to go to America. My mother still worked as cook in the country and I was all alone in the big city of London. The only friend and companion was my cat. I was never hungry but I had to feed her, so I cooked ~~four~~ both of us. She cheered me up. At night she snuggled against my feet under the covers and in the morning she woke me up nuzzling my cheeks with her cold wet nose.

As Hitler invaded the continent and tried to conquer England, restrictions on aliens became much tighter, even against Jews. Male refugees were put in internment camps or shipped to Australia. My mother who had worked near the coast lost her job and joined me in London. We were waiting for visas to the U.S.A. Life was not easy. We lived in a room on the fourth floor of a boarding house. To pay for food and rent we crocheted lots and lots of gloves. Lucky had a ball—actually balls of wool, sometimes getting entangled. It slowed down our output but lifted our spirits. She liked strange foods for a cat: bananas got her wildly excited. Cats are said to be independent and not as devoted to their owners as dogs. But Lucky was very affectionate and always happy.

In the summer and fall of 1940 war was no longer ^{just} headlines in the papers

* or Mar. 13 ?

LUCKY :-2-

papers but a reality for us. Hitler started to drop bombs over London. Sometimes planes flew over by day but mostly the bombers came at night. The English people were very brave, there was no panic and Hitler did not succeed. Whenever the airraid siren sounded during the day we would rush downstairs and sit on the steps in the hallway and the landlady would say: "Let's have a cup of tea."

However, for many weeks my mother and I spent every night in a shelter in the catacombs under a church, with many people. We slept on stone floors. Animals were not allowed to come there. On leaving the shelter, we often had to pick our way through rubble, as one house or another had suffered a direct hit. So far our house was still intact.

When we returned home one morning, Lucky was not there. We had forgotten to close one window and draw the curtains. A terrible premonition gripped us. The noise of the bombs and sirens had been especially loud last night. Did Lucky get scared and try to escape the commotion? We looked anxiously out of the window. There -four floors below- we spied a small furry form. We ran downstairs. I picked up my beloved kitten, cradling her in my arms and we rushed to the vet. He gave us no hope and put her gently to sleep..

We cried a lot all the way home. Our cat had joined the millions of Hitler's innocent victims.

After we sat home for a while a strange thing occurred: hour after hour the doorbell rang and neighbours and strangers alike came to tell us how sorry they were that we ^{had} lost our pet. In spite of their own troubles, the English people -who love animals very much- found the time and sympathy to share our grief.

This made us feel much, much better.

